24

March

I do not admit that anything should be prejudicial to me; on the contrary, I want everything to be useful to me. I intend to turn everything to advantage.

25

March

The inside of Gerard's head-clear, sonorous, and frigid —like a room without .furniture and without a fire. . . .

This morning, between my pen and my brain, no haze intervenes.

28

March

From little Gerard's presence here I have now gained about everything that I could hope to gain. It is to be feared, if he stays too long with me, that I might become a Christian again. I am too keenly aware of the use he might derive from practicing certain maxims of the Gospels, and I cannot restrain a *profound* indignation upon seeing him squander without beauty a moral patrimony that generations have striven, *with abnegation,* to build up for him. (That seems almost to come from an article by Claretie; but if I begin trying to write *elegantly/'Iamlost.)

His monstrous fatuousness is unhealthy; one would like to treat it like a cancer, but perhaps without any greater hope of curing it. Perhaps he owes to his very constitution his inability to prefer any pleasure to that of vanity. He is bored.

He claims that he is better now; my fear is that he really believes this. Yet no, he cannot be taken in by this superficial semblance. Indeed, after an hour or two of calm work he still recaptures that clear complexion which I often think lost forever. . . . An hour later,

his cheeks redden again, take on that dreadful brick shade; the look in his eyes becomes heavy, closed. . . . How can you then distinguish him from any other dissipated wash-out? He frequents them assiduously; that is in fact his environment; even his fatuousness brings him closer to them; that is the only milieu in which his remaining distinctions are legal tender.

29

March

I reread my old letters to Em. that I have brought from Cuverville.

In vain I seek in them some material for my novel. But in doing so I lay bare all my intellectual flaws. There is not one of them that fails to annoy me.

30

March

Gerard.—He has his good qualities nevertheless; he had his virtues*

I liked many things in him.